





To  
Frank  
"Clarence Levering"  
at the console"  
Dec. 1930.



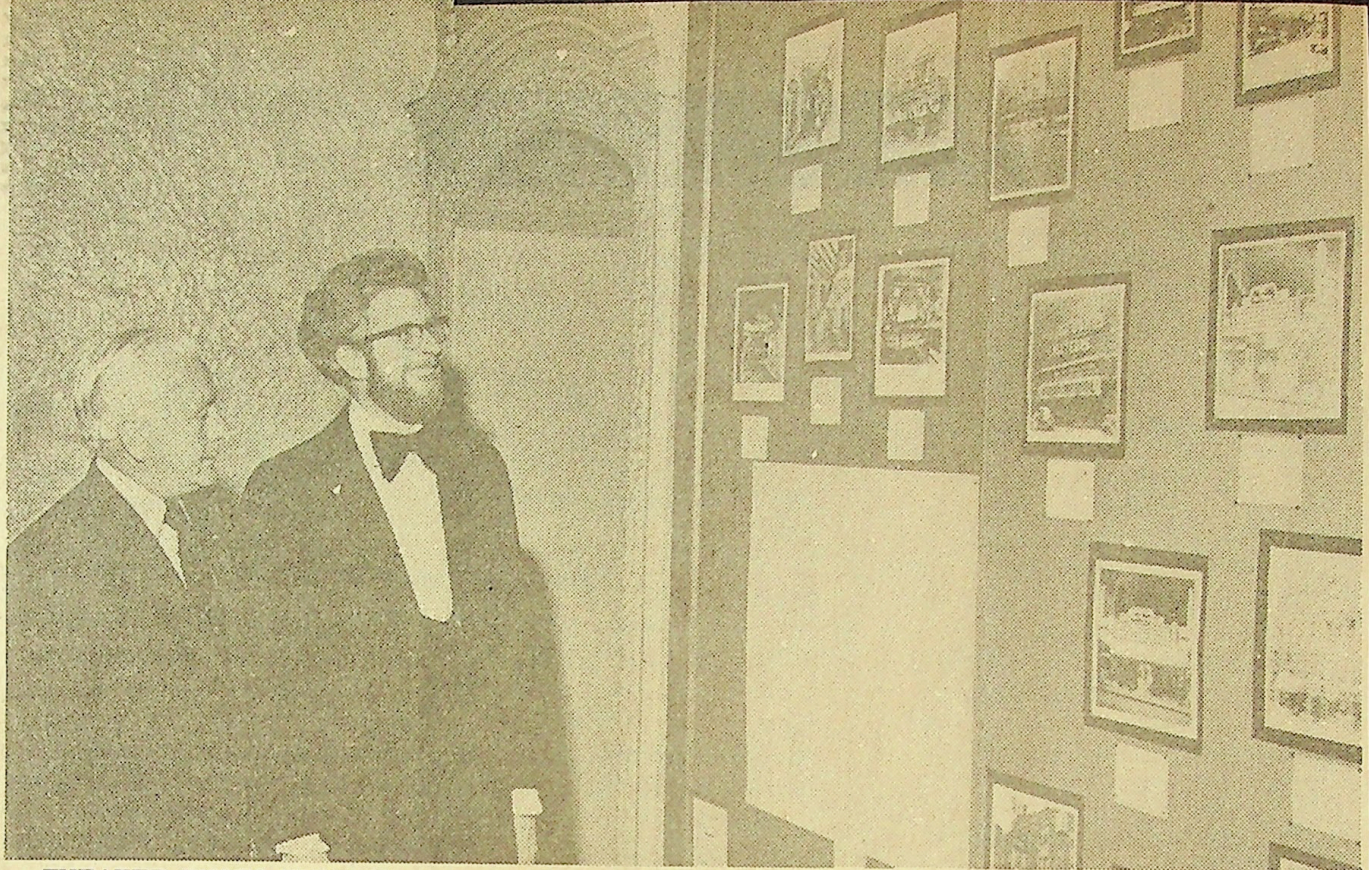
From

The J. Neifert

Studio

Kalamazoo, - Mich





**THEATER PHOTO EXHIBIT** — Jerry Alexander (right), a theater and theater organ buff, shows off one of his two displays of old theater photos to Lyle Smith, president of W. S. Butterfield Theaters, Inc., of Detroit, during Smith's visit to Kalamazoo Thursday for the 50th anniversary celebration at the

State Theater. This display is of early State Theater pictures, including a blueprint for lighting the theater's ceiling stars. Another display is of photos of other theaters designed by the State's architect, John Ebersson. Alexander served as historian for the anniversary show. —Gazette Photo By Rick Campbell

## State Theatre Lineup Set

There won't be any jugglers or animal acts, but there'll be plenty of chorus-line kickers, singers, hoofers and comedians in the State Theater's 50th Anniversary shindig July 13 and 14.

Duwain Hunt, director of the vaudeville-style production, says he's encouraged by the local talent chosen during auditions last week to participate in the celebration program.

Magician Harry Blackstone Jr. will headline the vaudeville bill, and the Charlie Chaplin classic, "The Gold Rush," will be shown in its entirety as part of the program each night.

Radio personality Jerry Raffel will be master of ceremonies. Don Dillon III is vocal music director, Lindsey Canfield Thomas is choreographer, and Trent Kynaston is orchestra conductor. John Catherwood will be at the Barton organ console for background during the silent Chaplin movie.

Also slated to entertain during the event is The Mixed Blend, an Allegan-based Madrigal group slated to entertain in the lobby before the show.

Hunt says the lineup includes a soft shoe number by P. Lang Bethea and Sarah Combs; a romantic

song by Lonnie Vick and Sue Desposato; and a rendition of the famous "Who's On First" Abbott and Costello dialog by Dave Hurd and Brian Weaver.

Rhonda and Robin White, who are twins, will do a song and dance number with Gene Keller, and Keller will also perform with the 11-member chorus line.

Ken Derby and Jill Halperin will do a romantic song and dance duet, Gina Ferraro will do a comic dance number on roller skates, and Jerry Campbell will provide running gags between the acts.

The chorus line includes Lillian Nunley, Vikki Klobucher, Shelley Beardslee, Brenda Paul, Sarah Combs, Claire Waring, Hollis Johnson, Lou Warner, Gina Ferraro, Jan Speers and Laurel Epstein.

Mail-order tickets for either of the 8 p.m. programs are available by sending checks to the State Theater 50th Anniversary Committee. Balcony seats are \$5, and main-floor seats are \$6. Checks should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and mailed to the Kalamazoo Public Museum, 315 S. Rose.

Mail-order sales will end July 1, when the tickets will go on sale at the State Theater box office.

## Seat / on the Aisle

# Assurances On Theater's Future

By DON W. CARLSON

Gazette Fine Arts And  
Entertainment Editor

Kalamazoo's State Theater, which celebrated its 50th birthday this past week, will remain a viable part of the downtown business area as a general audience movie theater for the foreseeable future.

That assurance came from Lyle Smith, president of W. S. Butterfield Theaters, Inc., the Detroit - based company which operates more than 60 outstate theaters including the State, Campus and Beacon in Kalamazoo.

Smith came to the city Thursday to attend the final night of the two - day golden anniversary celebration for the 1,590 - seat State — a lots of fun sort of party that included vaudeville, magician Harry Blackstone Jr., a chorus line, full pit orchestra and showing of the Charlie Chaplin classic, "The Gold Rush," with organ accompaniment by John Catherwood.

Both Wednesday and Thursday performances were completely sold out, and this, plus the community effort which went into putting on the commemorative event, obviously impressed Smith (whom, it should also be noted, was responsible for some generous contributions to restoration of the theater's Barton organ).

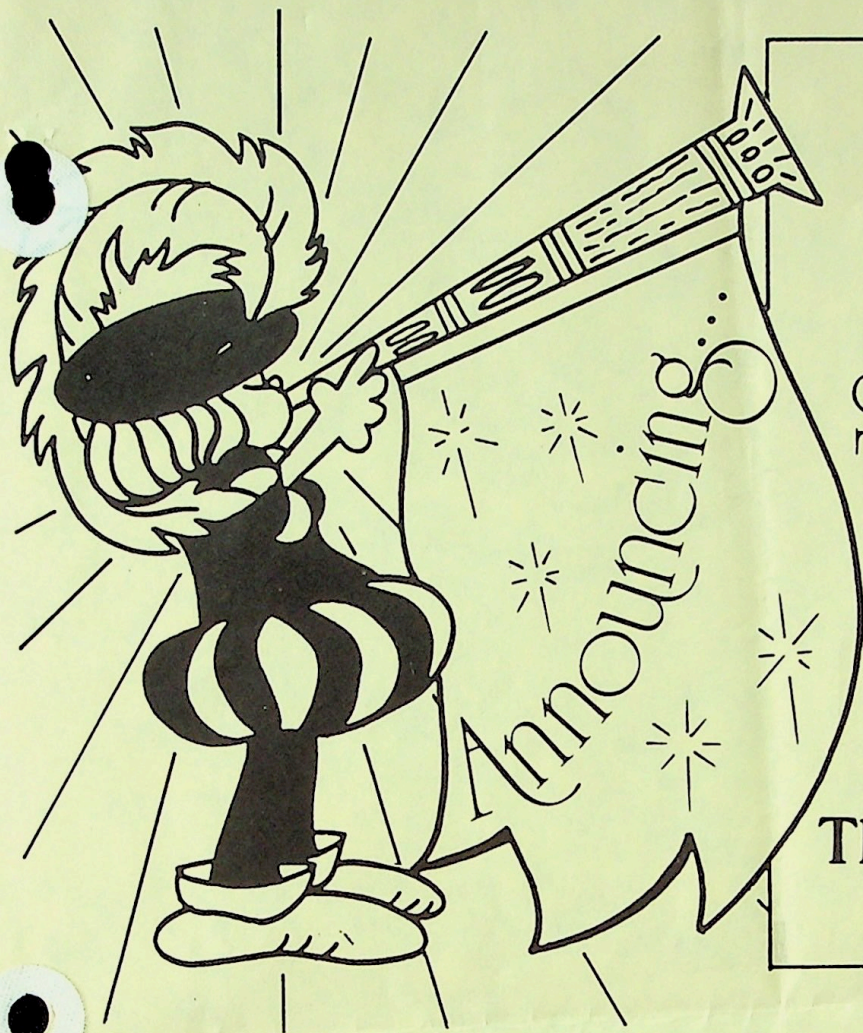
"If the large, downtown theater can survive anywhere," Smith told us, "it probably will be in Kalamazoo . . . Kalamazoo can do it if any city can."

Later, in a brief appearance on stage during the vaudeville show, Smith also indicated that the company would be receptive to future programs of live entertainment. The opening night had prompted suggestions that something similar to the anniversary celebration should be made an annual event, principally as a showcase for local talent.

Smith also confirmed what had been reported here earlier that the State is the last and best preserved of the outstate "movie palaces" built in the 1920s and early '30s. Butterfield last year gave up the Temple Theater, a 2,200 - seat theater that is architecturally roccoco in the manner of the State.

One other thing should be mentioned in connection with the anniversary.

With tickets at \$6 and \$5, and every seat sold, the event probably produced the theater's highest gross for any two shows in its history. And that is good because it means the committee which sponsored the celebration will come out ahead and be able to reimburse those good souls who helped get the thing off the ground with some generous loans.



## AN OLD FASHION CHRISTMAS AT

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Theatre



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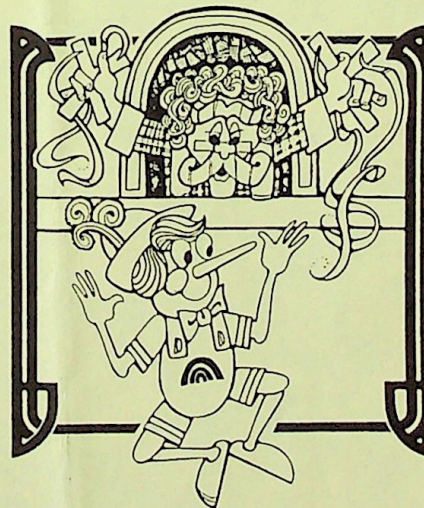
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Albrights Music, Southland  
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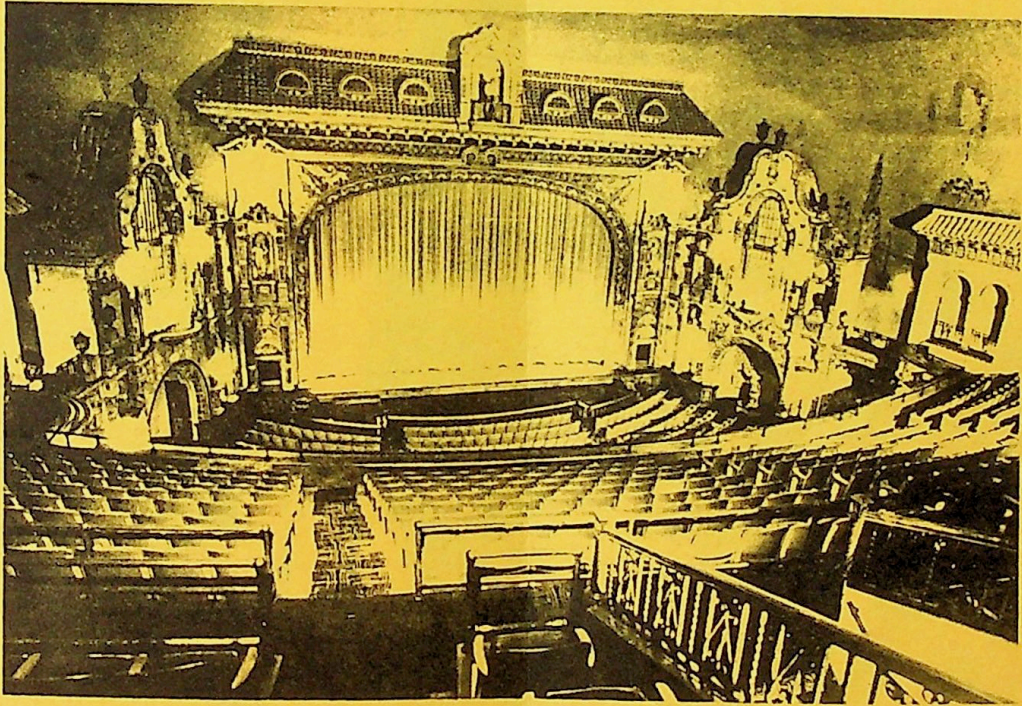
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Music by HOWARD DIETZ and ARTHUR SCHWARTZ  
Directed by VINCENTE MINNELLI · Produced by ARTHUR FREED

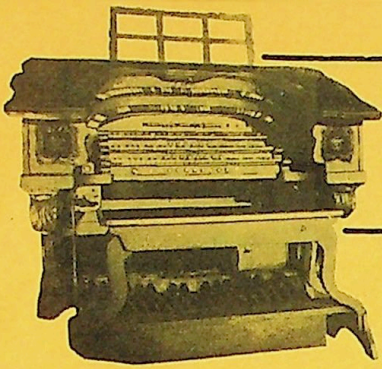
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TECHNICOLOR  
TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY  
SUNDAY - MAY 13TH  
ONE DAY ONLY  
1:30-4:00-7:00 PM



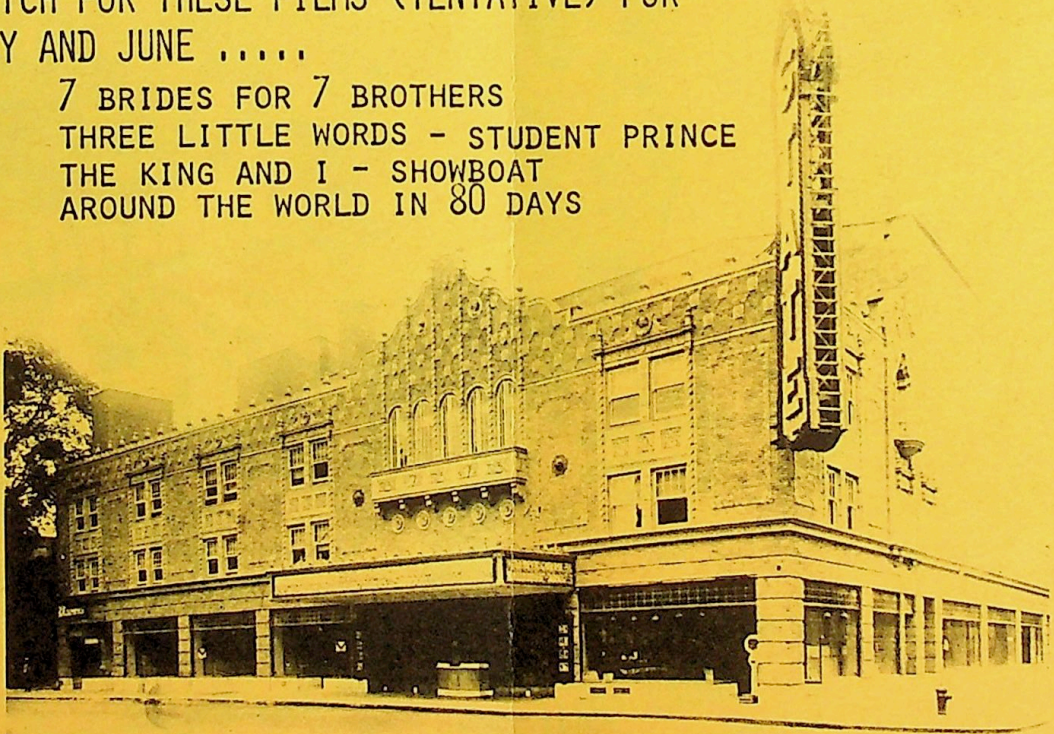
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BILL MOLLEMA AT THE BARTON ORGAN.....

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COMPLIMENTARY

# Creator Guide

NOVEMBER 1984

WHAT TO DO / WHAT TO SEE / WHERE TO DINE IN KALAMAZOO, BATTLE CREEK AND ALL OF SOUTHWEST LOWER MICHIGAN

## New Lease On Life For State Theatre



### PP&T

#### PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS

At-left, comedy comes to the Kalamazoo Hilton Inn, and, at right, South Haven prepares for its old fashioned hometown Christmas shopping atmosphere. See page 7.







## New Lease On Life For State Theatre

**K**alamazoo's historic State Theatre has a new lease on life—at least for two years.

The almost 60-year-old ornate theater at S. Burdick and Lovell Streets has long been the nervous focus of a large group of Kalamazoo residents who have feared the historic building would be destroyed.

Unlimited Entertainment Inc. of Kalamazoo last month assumed a two-year lease with the owner, Butterfield Theatres, during which time Unlimited Entertainment President Wayne Deering hopes to demonstrate that active and profitable use of the theater is viable, assuring an even more extended lifetime for the palatial structure.

**"Revival of the State Theatre has been close and dear to Wayne for a long time," explains Kevin Brady, general manager and promotional director for Unlimited Entertainment and production manager for its new State Theatre operations.**

Under the lease, the plan now, according to Deering, is to see if it can operate profitably, which could lead to the theater's indefinite revitalization at the end of the two-year period—either through a new lease or the corporation's purchase of the building.

"There are a lot of wonderful people who have worked to save the State," Derring says. "It can't be saved, however, by just going in every once in a while and dusting it off. The only way to save it is to use it—to generate money to maintain it."

He adds that now that the theater has the new lease on life, it is necessary for those interested in its perpetuation to support its operations.

It cannot be maintained, Brady points out, as a movie house—it cannot effectively compete with modern movie theaters. Its effective use is similar to one of its original functions, when, in addition to the 1920s movies, it also provided vaudeville programs.

Now it is being used to host the various jazz concerts that Unlimited Entertainment has been sponsoring the past few years in other facilities, including Chenery Auditorium. "We'll be doing our shows here just as we have been doing them elsewhere and rent it out to others for other kinds of concerts and shows—even other concert promotion companies," Brady says.

He said Unlimited Entertainment will be holding a variety of concerts in the theater and the availability of the facility for rent to other groups—with a diversity of interests—will automatically generate a variety of attractions for the Kalamazoo area market. The size of the theater also encourages variety. Such a variety could include jazz and classical music, legitimate theater productions, variety shows, children's shows, magic shows, various kinds of benefits, fund-raising activities, and political events.

**"I see a lot of activity for the State in the coming months," Deering says, optimistic that this kind of operation of the once-closed theater will prove economically feasible. "We had been planning on a show of some kind once a week and already there are several scheduled for November, and I've received inquiries from many other people and groups about using the facility."**

The "built-in" attractions of the theater—its nostalgic and unique Spanish courtyard interior atmosphere, its excellent acoustics, its large seating capacity (1,589)—have been further enhanced by Unlimited Entertainment's acquisition of a liquor license, making full bar service available for public and private functions in the theater.

Among the benefits of that service, Brady points out that "for example, for a fund-raising event we can provide the bar service and save the sponsoring group from having to go through the hassle of getting a special one-day liquor permit."

In addition to the public events that can be held in the theater, Brady says, it is available for many private uses as well—parties, banquets, business or industrial conferences or seminars, board meetings, receptions, even weddings and receptions. “An altar can be easily placed on the stage and the auditorium is a beautiful setting for a wedding.”

Brady emphasizes that for a company or a non-profit group renting the facility, the State operation offers many other helpful services—assistance with promotion and advertising, usher staff, the liquor service, stagehands who are familiar with the theater, and box office service. “They don’t have to work with a lot of ticket outlets and can have an ongoing, easily obtained daily accounting of the progress of advance ticket sales.”

And, he adds, “The State is available for very reasonable rental rates. We want the theater to be used.”

The liquor license, he says, is a major factor in contributing to the profitable operation of the theater—and, thus, the indefinite extension of its lifetime as well as the variety of presentations Unlimited Entertainment can offer. With the added bar service, “we can do some shows that may not fill the house but will show a profit. With dependence only on ticket sales, Unlimited Entertainment would be restricted only to shows that would draw capacity crowds.

The State’s box office is open daily Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. for purchase of tickets to any upcoming events at the State. Nancy Schreuder is the box office manager and bar manager Doug Thomsen also assists Brady in the operation of the theater.

**Workers have been cleaning and sprucing up the interior of the theater for its new operations, including replacement and repair of furniture, new carpeting, and a general overall cleaning. These efforts and future renovation efforts by Unlimited Entertainment, according to Brady, “will always be done with preservation of its historical role in mind.”**

Current Unlimited Entertainment productions at the State include an appearance by Doc Severinson and Xebron on November 4 and Steps Ahead (an all-star jazz band made up of some of the country’s most respected jazz musicians) on November 9. Other public events in the coming weeks include a magic show and children’s show.



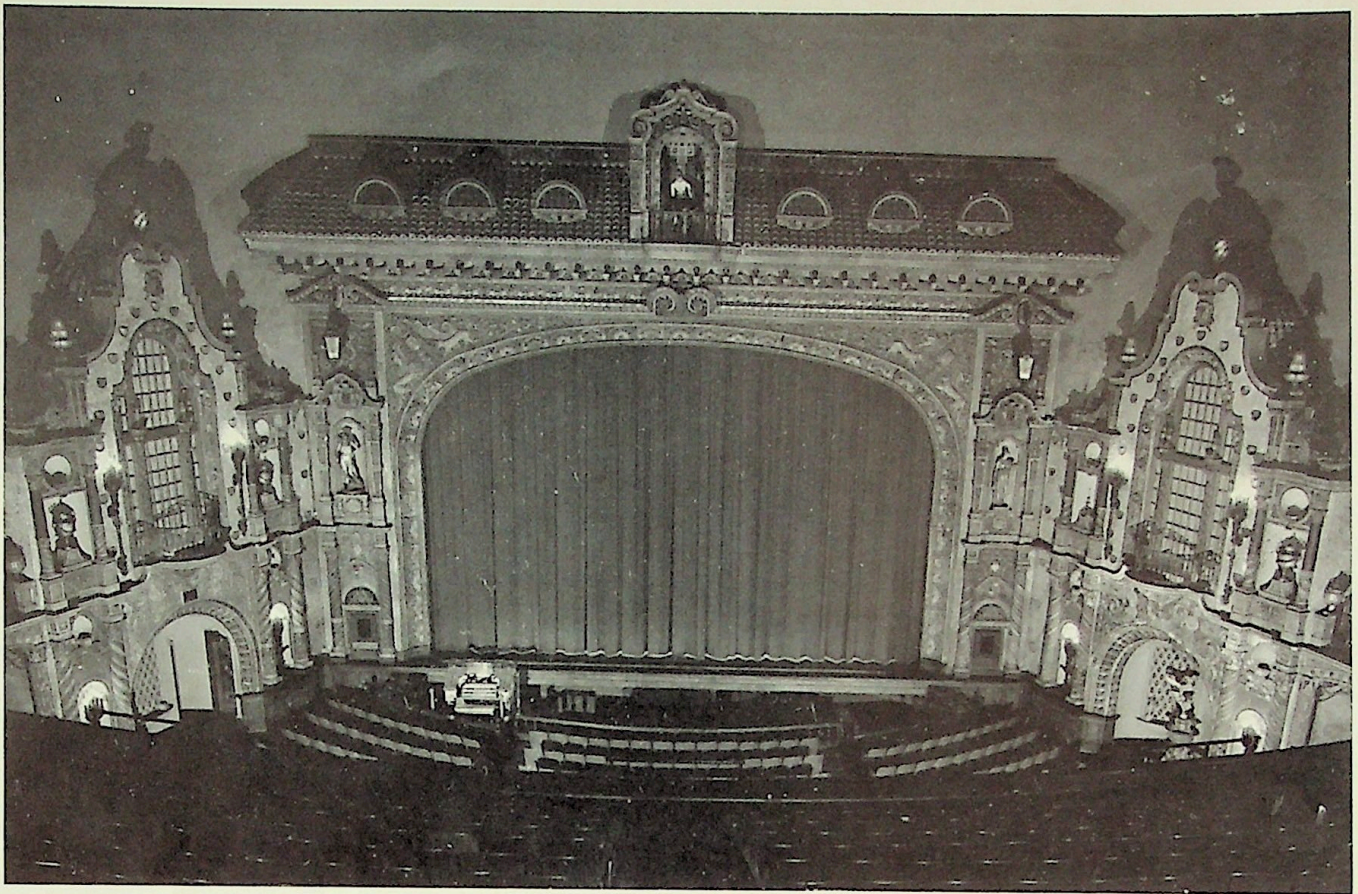
Production Manager Kevin Brady (left) and bar manager Doug Thomsen take a break from preparing the State Theatre for its re-opening.

The operation of the State is only the latest in a long line of dining and entertainment ventures in Kalamazoo during the past decade for Deering, a Bad Axe native, Western Michigan University graduate, and Kalamazoo accountant. In the early 1970s, he and his brother, Ronald, established Sunshine Submarine on S. Westnedge Avenue. Subsequent ventures have included Chap’s on Main and Club Soda in downtown Kalamazoo, both offering a variety of nightly entertainment; Pasta Pasta, an Italian cafe on the second floor of Sunshine Submarine; and Unlimited Entertainment, which has booked entertainment into Wayne Deering’s two downtown nightclubs, has brought a variety of big-name musicians to various locations in Kalamazoo, has put together outdoor summer concerts in the parking lot behind Chap’s on Main, and has now taken on the State Theatre.

continued on page 6



The State Theatre in its early days when the theatre featured movies and live presentations, including vaudeville. The theatre sign, now located above the marquee and front entrance, originally hung from the corner of the building, out of the picture to the right.



Interior of the State Theatre

Pictures of State Theatre interior  
courtesy Status Galleries Ltd.

**STATE THEATRE**  
continued from page 5

The operation of the State as a concert and show place has been a target of Deering ever since it ceased movie operations and closed its doors in the late 1970s, its future in doubt.

"A lot of people don't know how close the State recently came to being sold," Deering said, adding that potential buyers would have destroyed at least the interior

of the structure. At best, he says, the interior might have been dismantled and trucked off to another city to be re-assembled. Even with that "preservation," Kalamazoo still would have lost "the State."

"It is the nicest facility in all of southwestern Michigan," Deering says, "in terms of its historical significance, beauty, and its size."

continued on page 16

**From Subs To Music**

The State Theatre operation by Unlimited Entertainment Inc. of Kalamazoo is the latest impact that brothers Wayne and Ronald Deering have made on the dining-entertainment scene in Kalamazoo.

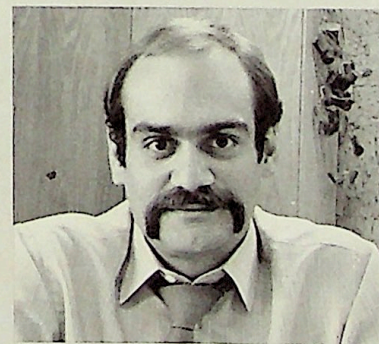
During the past decade, in chronological order, the innovations of Wayne Deering and, in some cases in conjunction with Ronald Deering, include:

**Sunshine Submarine**—Located at 816 S. Westnedge Avenue, near Vine Street in Kalamazoo, Sunshine Submarine has been one of the city's most frequented "sub shops" since it first opened in 1975.

**Chap's on Main**—This cozy nightclub is one of downtown Kalamazoo's most popular spots, during the day and especially at night, with live entertainment—jazz groups and singles, folk musicians and comedians—seven nights a week. It also offers outdoor patio dining during the summer and frequent outdoor concerts in the large Water Street parking lot behind the restaurant. Deering opened it in 1979.

**Unlimited Entertainment Inc.**—This promotion company, established in 1981 and now with offices in the State Theatre, in addition to operating the theater under a two-year lease arrangement, also books entertainment into Deering's two nightclubs downtown and puts on many special concerts in the city with various big name performers, concerts that are now being staged in the State.

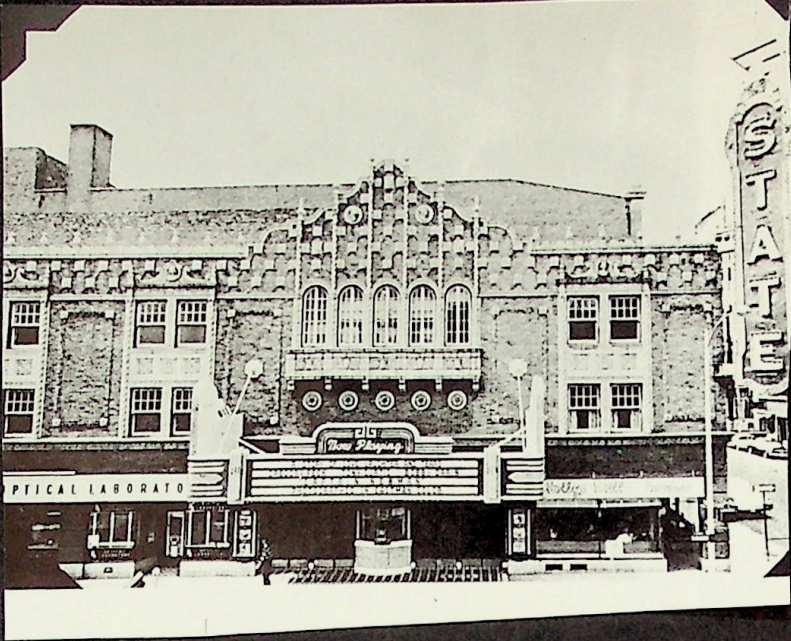
Wayne Deering



**Club Soda**—Located at 340 E. Michigan Avenue on the edge of Kalamazoo's downtown district, Club Soda offers nightly live band music—jazz, reggae, and rhythm and blues. It opened in 1982.

**Pasta Pasta**—This little Italian cafe was started in 1983 and is located on the second floor of Sunshine Submarine on S. Westnedge Avenue and offers freshly made pasta and sauces for a make-your-own meal along with beer and wine.

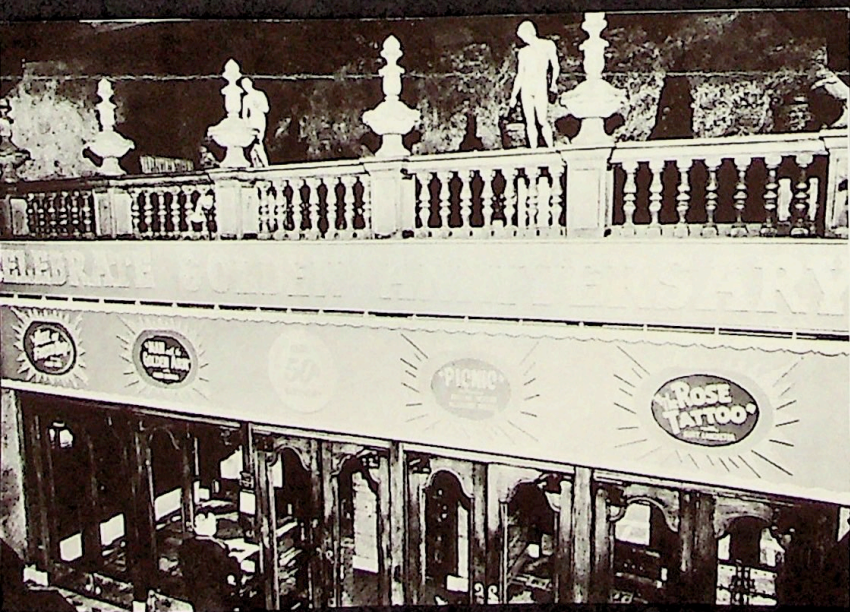
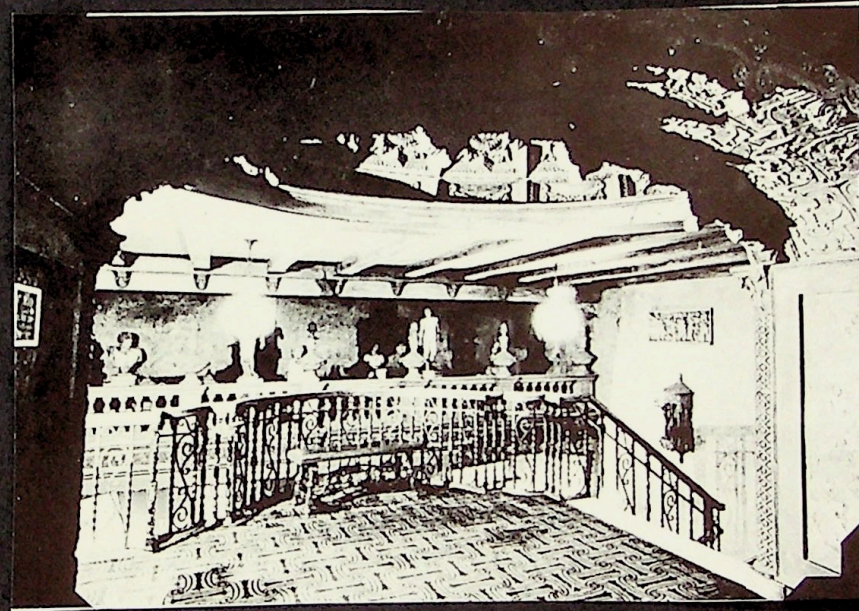
**State Theatre**—As the accompanying feature story details, Unlimited Entertainment now operates the State Theatre, complete with available liquor service, for its own concerts and other shows, concerts, and meetings sponsored by other individuals and groups in the community, keeping alive the historic Kalamazoo theater. †



New York City.

4-6-85

• **CONCERTS ADDED** – Unlimited Entertainment has announced two concerts planned for the State Theater in May. English singer-songwriter Joan Armatrading will perform there at 8 p.m. May 8 and Warren Zevon, best known for his hit "Werewolves of London," will appear there at 8 p.m. May 15. Tickets for the Armatrading show will sell for \$12.50 and \$13.50 and should be available by next Saturday, a spokesman for the group said. Zevon tickets exhibit of work by area artists which opens Friday, April 11, in the gallery of the Light Fine Arts Building, on the Kalamazoo College campus.



## State Theater Sought as Special Events Center

Booth News Service

**KALAMAZOO** — A citizens group trying to save the State Theater here has recommended the 54-year-old downtown moviehouse be purchased and operated as a special events center by the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo.

lectures, social events, meetings, and as a convention auxiliary faci-

The Save the State Theater Committee is negotiating with Butterfield Theaters for the purchase, the money for which it hopes to raise through public donations. The committee estimates \$600,000 would be needed to buy and renovate the building.

The building, staffed by arts council personnel, would be used for concerts, art exhibits, dances,